TEXT CONNECTIONS™

Opinions About

WORKERS' RIGHTS

THE 1913 LUDLOW COAL MINERS' STRIKE

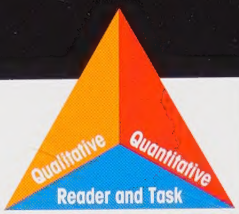
by Kim T. Griswell • illustrated by James Palmer

Benchmark EDUCATION

OPINION/ARGUMENT
HISTORICAL FICTION

Revolutionary Times

Accessing Complex Text



Quantitative	Lexile® 760L
Qualitative	Level S/44

What Makes This Text Complex?

Purpose and Levels of Meaning 4	• The text explains a complicated chapter of American history with delicacy and detail in order to prompt thoughtful discussion.
Structure 4	• The text has three sections and structures: introduction: descriptive; story: problem–solution; opinions: cause–effect.
Language Conventionality and Clarity 2	• The story is told in a folksy, yet literary style with many descriptive verbs and adjectives. Students may need to use context clues to understand some of the academic vocabulary related to labor issues.
Knowledge Demands 4	• This aspect of labor history may not typically be covered until upper levels.

Text complexity dimensions are scored on the following scale:
❶ Low ❷ Middle Low ❸ Middle High ❹ High

Focus on Reader and Task

The teacher's guide for this title provides:

- Multiple close reading sequences
- Explicit strategy mini-lessons
- Academic and domain-specific vocabulary instruction
- Analytic writing to sources

LEXILE® is a trademark of MetaMetrics, Inc., and is registered in the United States and abroad.

E-book and digital teacher's guide available at benchmarkuniverse.com.

BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY
145 Huguenot Street • New Rochelle, NY 10801

About Opinion Pieces

In an opinion piece, the writer states an opinion on a specific topic and supports the opinion with reasons based on facts and details. The writer's opinion may take the form of a "pro" or "con" (for or against) position. The text may be written as a letter addressed to a particular person or persons, or as an essay to be published.

Features of an Essay

- ✔ An essay has a strong beginning that introduces the topic, hooks the reader, and clearly states an opinion.
- ✔ It has an organizational structure that clearly lists reasons for the opinion.
- ✔ It provides evidence from other sources that support each reason.
- ✔ It uses linking words to connect the opinions with the reasons behind them.
- ✔ An essay provides a concluding statement or section that summarizes the opinion in a forceful way.

Credits
Editor: Jeffrey B. Fuerst
Contributing Editor: Ellen Ungaro
Creative Director: Laurie Berger
Art Director: Glenn Davis
Designer: Laurie Berger
Production: Loren E. Mack
Director of Photography: Doug Schneider
Photo Editor: Amanda Kaufmann

Photo Credits: Cover, Title Page, Pages 2B, 3A: courtesy of Library of Congress; Page 3B: Colorado National Guard, 1914 (b/w photo), American Photographer, (20th century)/Denver Public Library, Western History Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library; Pages 7, 14: © Bettmann/Corbis; Page 8: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, x-60410; Page 10: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, x-60459; Page 11A: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, x-60361

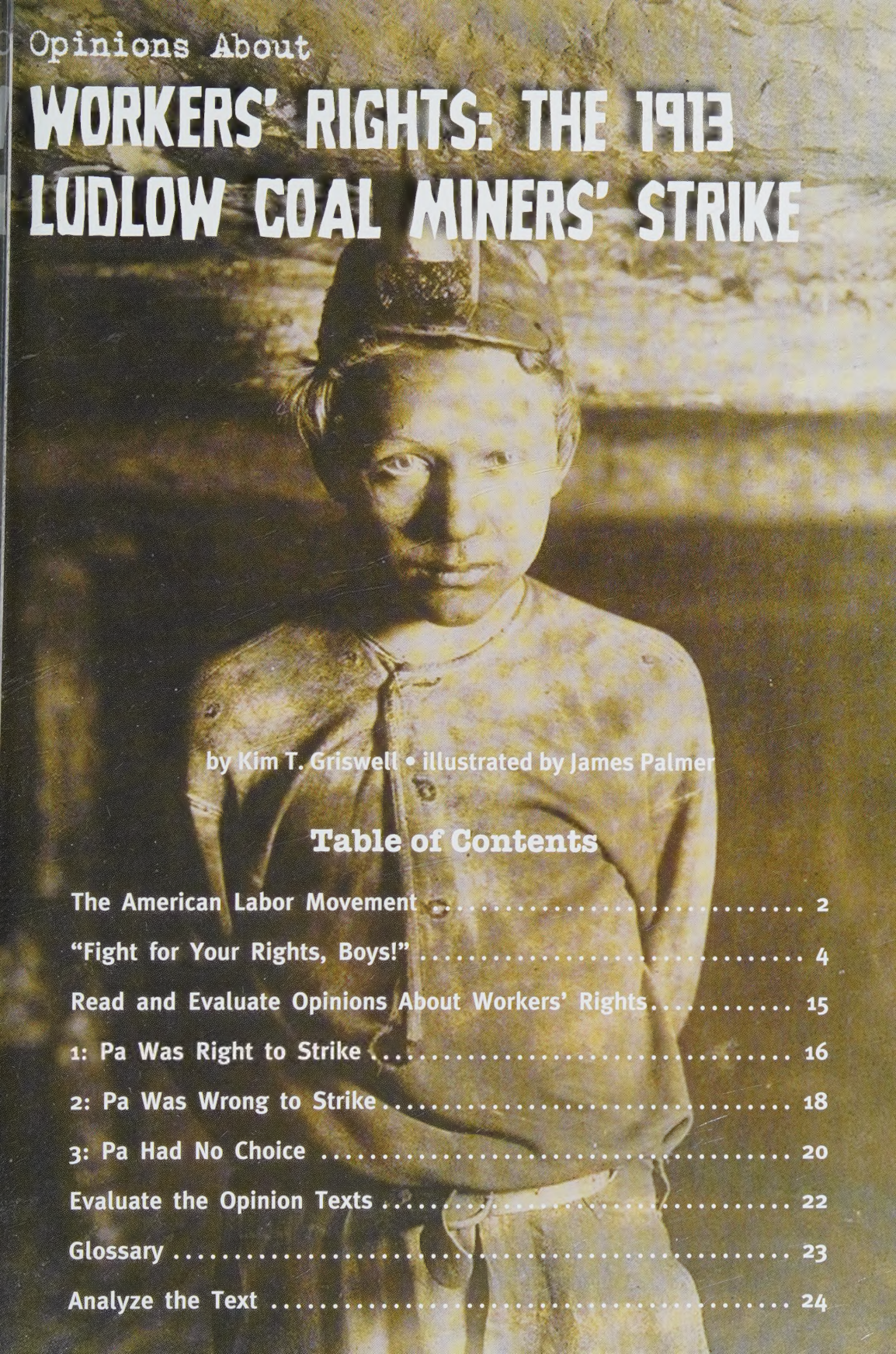
© Benchmark Education Company, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in Heyuan, China. 8716/0117/CP011892

ISBN: 978-1-4900-0070-1

Toll-Free 1-877-236-2465
www.benchmarkeducation.com
www.benchmarkuniverse.com

Opinions About

WORKERS' RIGHTS: THE 1913 LUDLOW COAL MINERS' STRIKE



by Kim T. Griswell • illustrated by James Palmer

Table of Contents

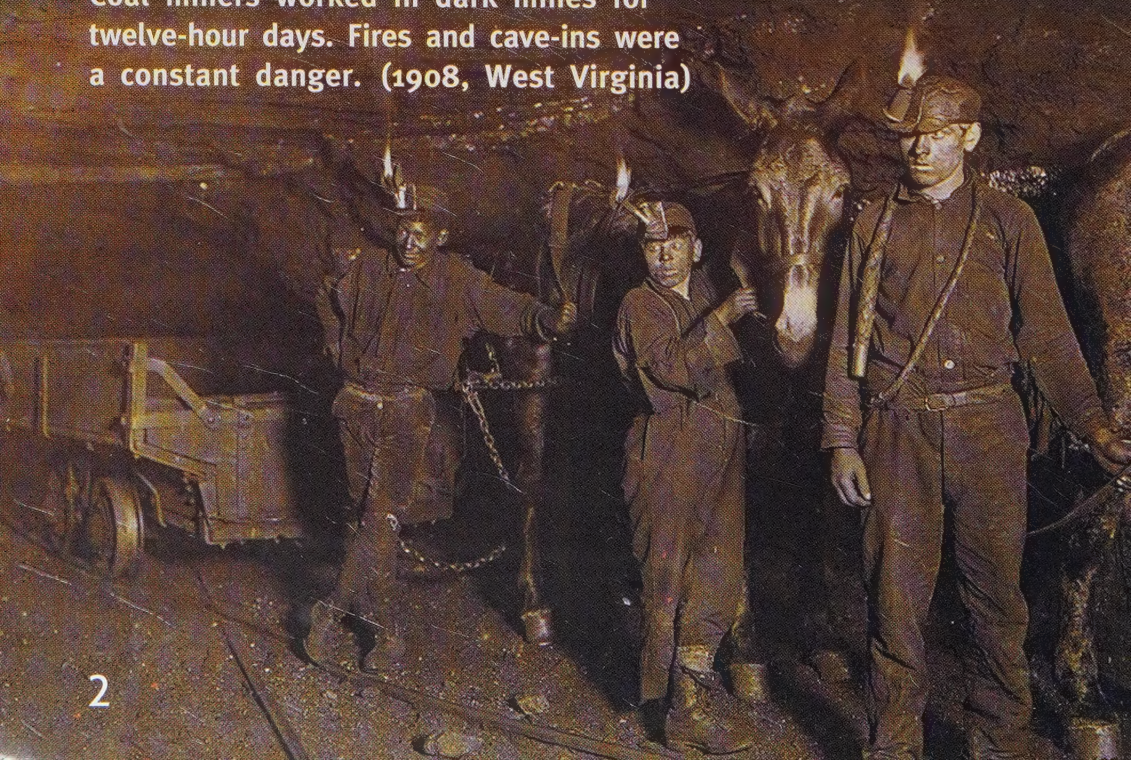
The American Labor Movement 2
"Fight for Your Rights, Boys!" 4
Read and Evaluate Opinions About Workers' Rights 15
1: Pa Was Right to Strike 16
2: Pa Was Wrong to Strike 18
3: Pa Had No Choice 20
Evaluate the Opinion Texts 22
Glossary 23
Analyze the Text 24

THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the **Industrial Revolution** caused a big shift in the way workers made a living. Before that time, most people farmed or worked as **artisans**. Tailors, silversmiths, bricklayers, and other laborers set their own prices for the goods they made and sold. They chose the hours they worked and how long the workday would be.

As industry grew, many workers found jobs in places like factories and mines. Businesses, not workers, decided what wage a worker would earn. The average American worker often put in a twelve-hour workday. Men, women, and even some children had to work seven days a week just to make a living.

Conditions in many workplaces were unsafe, even deadly. Mines were among the deadliest, and Colorado mines had one of the worst safety records in the country. Between 1902 and 1917, 472 workers died in mine explosions in the state.

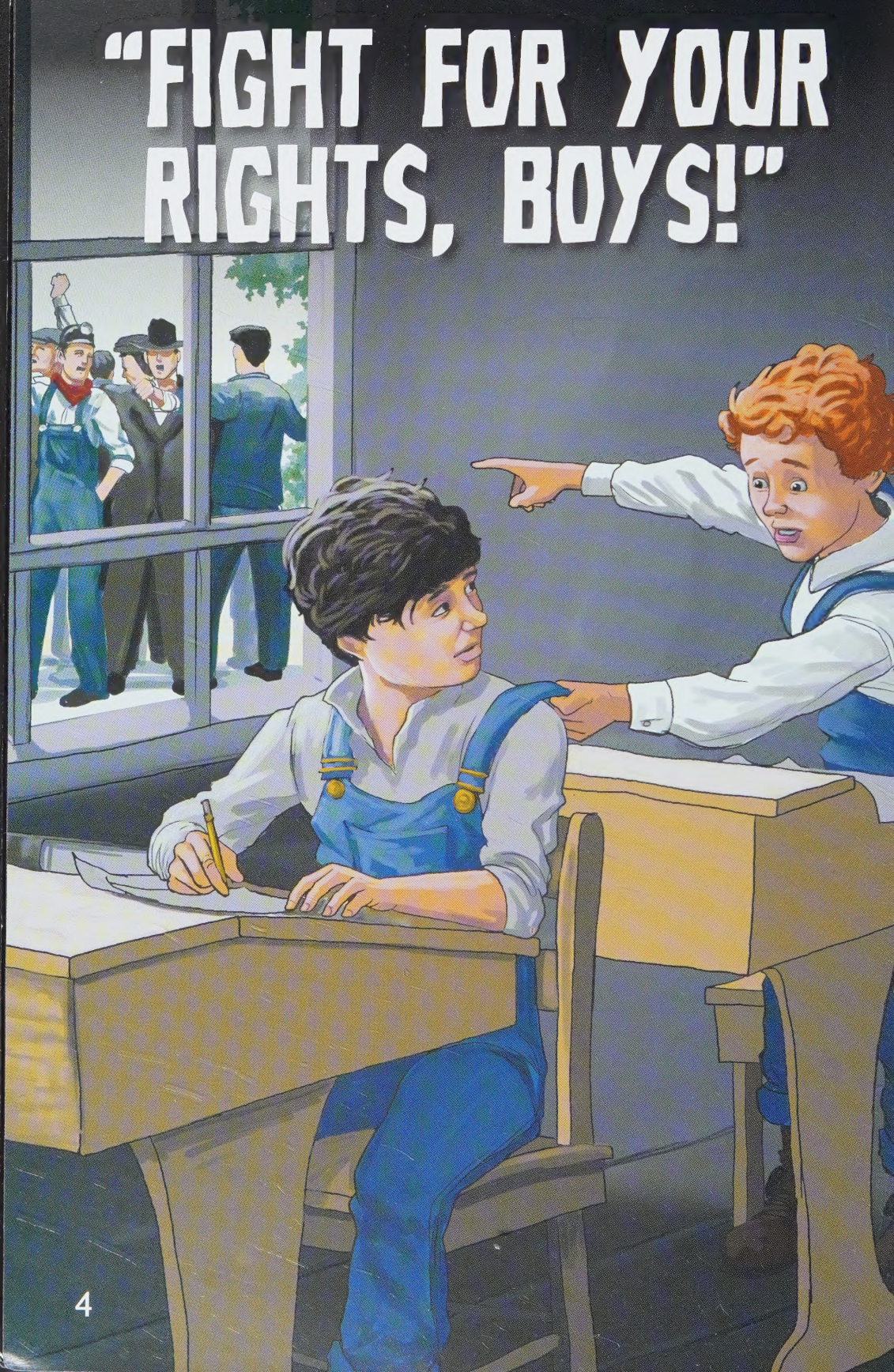


Coal miners worked in dark mines for twelve-hour days. Fires and cave-ins were a constant danger. (1908, West Virginia)

The American labor movement grew out of the need to protect workers. Labor **unions**, including the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), formed to fight for workers' rights in 1890. Unions demanded better pay, reasonable hours, and safer conditions for workers. When industry would not listen, unions asked their members to **strike**. Strikes in this era often ended in violence as industry owners brought in **strikebreakers**.

In this book you'll read a fictional story about a boy from a mining family involved in a **pivotal** strike in 1913. The story is based on the accounts of survivors of one of the biggest tragedies in American labor history: the Ludlow Mine Massacre. What happened at the Ludlow mining camp was part of the Colorado Coalfield War—the most violent labor conflict in U.S. history. The UMWA lost the war. Miners went back to work, their demands unmet. But the deaths at Ludlow led to an investigation by the U.S. Congress into labor conditions in American industry. In 1938 Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. The FLSA protects workers from unfair practices such as unequal pay, excessive work hours, lack of overtime pay, and unsafe work conditions.

The National Guard (above right) fired on striking miners during the Colorado Coalfield War. Miners examine the ruins of their tent camp (above).


"FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS, BOYS!"

September 1913

"Psst!" Covey McCarty tugged the strap of Joseph's overalls. "Look outside."

"Shush!" Joseph Zoric shot back over his shoulder. He knew better than to talk in class. The school provided for miners' kids by the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company was no **democracy**. Their teacher, Miss Jackson, ruled her classroom with a frown that could skin the smile off a boy's face. Joseph understood. Turning immigrant miners' kids into Americans had to be about as tough as turning coal into diamonds.

For years his pa had filled Joseph's head with tales about America, a place where a man could rise from poverty to privilege. Here in southern Colorado, coal seams climbed the canyons between the hills. Mining towns climbed right along with them, including Trinidad, where his family lived.

Here anything seemed possible. The mine owner, Mr. John D. Rockefeller Jr., was the perfect example of what Pa had told Joseph about America. Mr. Rockefeller's grandpa had been a traveling salesman. Now the Rockefeller family was one of the richest in the country.

School wasn't the only good thing about America. Back in Serbia, Joseph had shared an attic with six cousins. Now his family had a two-room house, all to themselves. "CF&I takes care of its own," said the mine boss, Mr. Lamont Bowers.

"It's the miners!" someone shouted. Before Miss Jackson could stop them, kids swarmed toward the door, each one pushing to be first to reach the street. Covey pulled Joseph through the crowd.

"That's what I was trying to tell you. The miners are marching! Look! There's my pa!" Covey whipped off his cap and waved at the coal miners marching shoulder to shoulder down the dusty street.

Union organizers had come to town a few weeks back. They wanted CF&I miners to join the union and fight for their rights—fair pay and safe conditions. Pa wasn't marching. He hadn't come to America to fight. He'd come to build a better life for his family. As the men marched past, Joseph shrank back toward the schoolhouse.

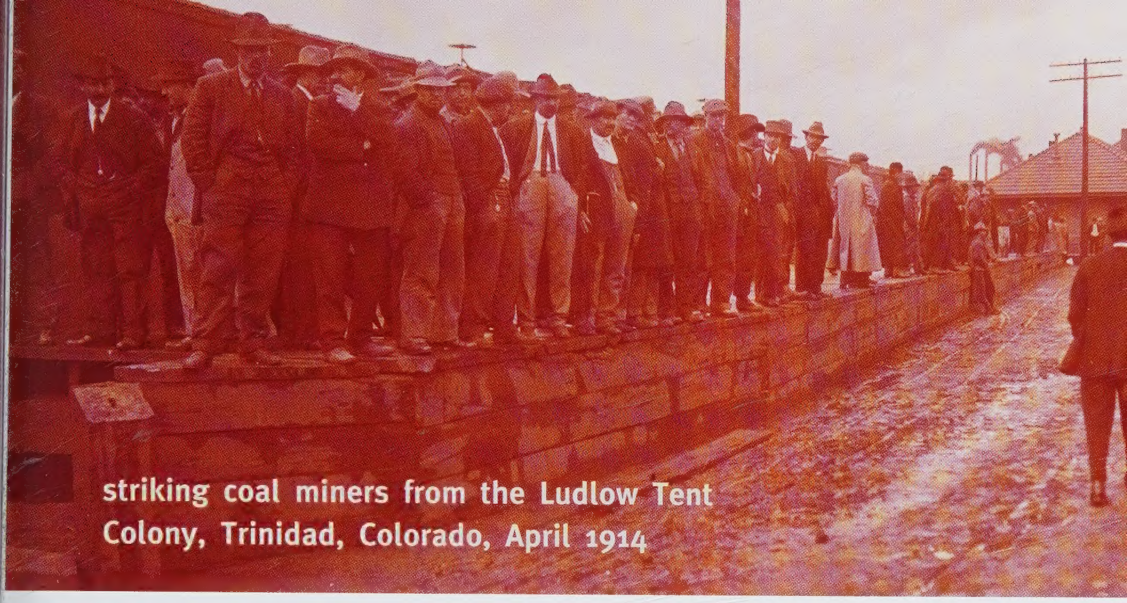
That night, Covey and his folks went over to the Zorics' for dinner. The talk was all about the miners' march.

"The union leaders say if a strike is called, every coal miner in America will back us," said Mr. McCarty. "How about you, Zoric?"

Joseph leaned forward. "Pa's not a union man."

"Well, maybe he should be," said Mr. McCarty. "The union's inside man has Lamont Bowers wrapped around his finger."

"What's an inside man?" asked Joseph.



striking coal miners from the Ludlow Tent Colony, Trinidad, Colorado, April 1914

"A miner who pretends to be anti-union and wins the trust of the mine boss and then tells the boss who to fire," Mr. McCarty said. "Know who Monty Bowers will fire first? Miners like your pa who refuse to join the union."

"But that's not fair!" said Joseph.

"It's not about what's fair," said Mr. McCarty. "It's about who's in charge. CF&I wants to keep control of everything. Who gets to work. How much we get paid. Where we live. Where we shop. The union wants to give us miners more say."

"But the mine doesn't belong to the men. It belongs to Mr. Rockefeller," Joseph replied.

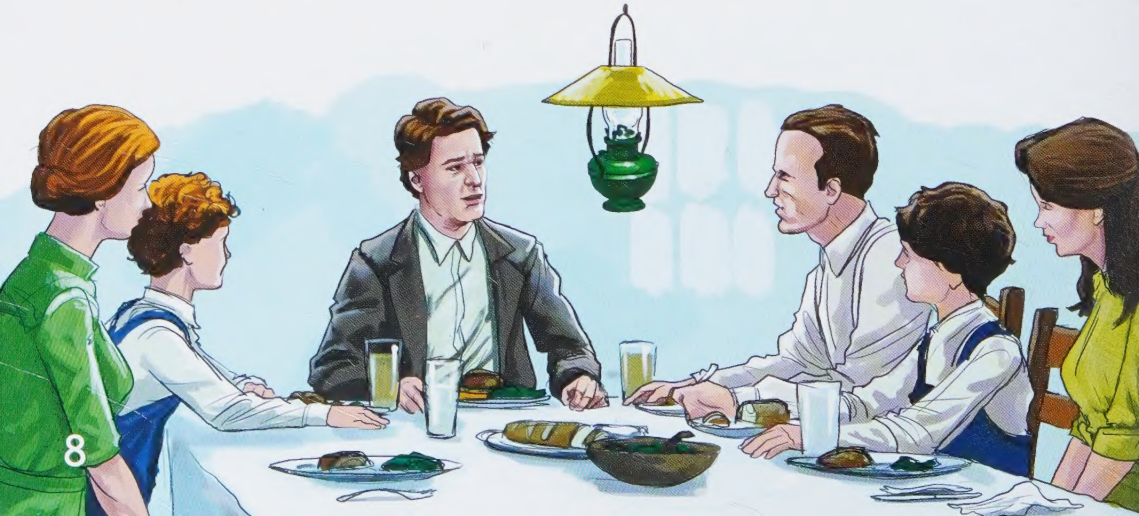
Pa wiped his mouth with a cloth napkin and pushed back from the table. "Him, and men like him, sure. But it's the mine they own, son, not us. This is America, remember?"

The talk of strike did not die down as Joseph had hoped. Lamont Bowers sent for detectives. The Baldwin-Felts agency had recently stopped West Virginia miners from striking; Mr. Bowers hoped they'd do the same in Colorado. The agency men drove into Trinidad in an armored car. Covey whistled in admiration.

"What do you think, boys?" A detective climbed out and clanged his thick knuckles against the metal-plated car. "That's three-inch steel. Want to know what's inside? Machine guns. We call her the Death Special."

"Joseph!" His father's voice rang down the street. "Come along, Son. Covey, you head home too."

"That's right." The detective grinned. "Wouldn't want to get yourself shot, now would you?"



Pa clenched his fists and took a step toward the detective, but Joseph pulled him away. As they walked home, Pa ran dirt-caked fingers through his coarse brown hair. "Nothing but dead work today," he said. "And now this."

Dead work meant shoring tunnels and laying track. The mine didn't pay for dead work. Too much dead work meant no **scrip** to spend at the company store. Joseph's belly rumbled just thinking about it.

"If a man gives a day's work, he should get a day's pay," Pa said. "It's one of the things the union wants changed."

"Pa! Those union men are just trying to stir up trouble."

"If trouble gets me paid for the work I do, then maybe things need stirring."

Just as they reached the front steps of their house, a series of rapid blasts ripped through the air. The Death Special! Joseph whirled to head back, but Pa grabbed his arm, hard. "Get inside. Keep your ma safe." Pa rushed down the street.

The bursts of gunfire continued. Shouts rang out. Pa didn't return. Ma rocked and knitted, rocked and knitted. Finally the door opened and Pa stepped inside. Something that might have been blood was mixed with the dirt on his hands.

The next morning, we learned that the Baldwin-Felts men had opened fire on a union meeting, spraying bullets into the crowd. They didn't care who they hit: union men, casual onlookers, even a boy.

"I reckon they've made the choice for me," Pa said. "After this night, any man who doesn't strike isn't a man at all." Pa tightened the rope that held the pile of household goods atop the wagon.

Every man who'd walked off the job had been told to pack up. "These houses belong to CF&I," said the detective who'd pounded on their front door. "You won't work, then clear out."

The union had set up a camp to house the striking miners. To keep out strikebreakers, rows of white canvas tents blocked the canyon like teeth bared in **defiance**. Joseph spotted stovepipes jutting from the tops of every tent. Inside, fresh-sawn boards covered the mud. A row of sturdy cots stood waiting. They'd be warm and dry, but it wasn't a house.

"Don't worry, son," said Pa. "With this many men on strike, there won't be any coal coming out of the mines. We'll be home before you know it."

Pa was wrong. The winter was long and brutally cold. The union's coal supplies had **dwindled**, and now they shivered in their beds most nights. Just around Easter, Pa came back from a union meeting. "The National Guard is on its way," he said. "Louis Tikas says they're here to break the strike. Tikas also said . . ."

"Tikas says! Tikas says!" cried Joseph. "You used to think for yourself, Pa! Now all you do is repeat what Tikas says."

"I remember when my son used to show me respect," Pa said softly.

"Sorry, Pa," Joseph replied, staring at his mud-splattered boots.

Pa nodded. Then, a twinkle came to his eyes. "But Mr. Tikas did say he's not going to let a bunch of strikebreakers stop us from having fun. The Sunday ball game's on!"

Joseph jumped to his feet with a cheer. He and Covey lit out for the field south of camp.

In the middle of the fifth inning, the National Guard commander drove into camp. He got out, slammed the car door, and shouted, "We're here to search for guns."

Tikas stepped forward and said, "We have no guns."

Joseph knew better. Many of the tents had pits hidden beneath the floorboards. They'd been dug to protect the women and kids from flying bullets. They also made the perfect hiding place for guns and ammunition.

Joseph found his dad at the edge of the ball field. "Pa, you got to go back to the mine. Mr. Tikas . . . the other leaders . . . they're gonna get us killed. If you go back, things will be just like they were before."

Pa put his hands on Joseph's shoulders and looked him in the eyes. "That's the problem. If I go back—if we go back," he nodded toward the men milling about the field, "things will be the same."

"Good!" Joseph shouted. "We'll have a house, plenty of food, and I can go to school again. And we won't have to dodge bullets every day!"

Pa's mouth set in a thin, hard line. "If we don't fight for change, this whole country will be owned by a handful of wealthy, powerful men. And working men will do what they're told or starve. That's just like the old country. Head for the pit, son, and stay there till I tell you different."

As Joseph glumly wove his way back to the tent, Covey caught up and grabbed his sleeve. "They're surrounding the camp," Covey said. "We need to get to the pit. Miners' kids gotta stick together."

Joseph yanked his arm away. "I'm tired of hiding in pits."

Joseph scrambled up a hill to a flat-topped boulder and stood looking at the white tent city below. And then . . . a boom blasted apart the silence and shots rang out from every direction.

Women screamed and snatched up children. Miners ran for the tents and came out clutching rifles. Bullets ripped through the camp. Joseph crouched behind a boulder, his heart pounding.

Moments later, he smelled smoke. He peered around the boulder. What he saw brought him to his feet. The tent city was in flames! Sparks jumped from tent to tent. The fire spread like it was hungry—hungry for canvas and straw mattresses and worn-out clothes. Joseph dropped to his knees as every hope he'd ever had scattered with the ash into the bright blue Colorado sky.

The next day Joseph wandered through what was left of the camp. In place of tents, he saw blackened bedsprings. He saw smoking heaps that had once been **precious** things, like a wedding tablecloth carried all the way from Russia. But that wasn't the worst of it. Not by a mile. The worst was the pit filled with the bodies of two women and eleven children.

The National Guard had swept through the camp and taken everything of value, including his best friend. Joseph put one hand into his mother's and the other into his father's. He thought about the cozy house and all they'd left behind. Then he remembered Covey's ghost-white face as he urged him to run to the pit. "Miners' kids gotta stay together," he'd said. Joseph's fingers tightened on his parents' hands. "Yeah, Covey," he whispered. "We do."

Thirteen women and children died in this pit when the tent above them caught fire after the fighting began.

READ AND EVALUATE OPINIONS ABOUT WORKERS' RIGHTS

You've just read a story about the experiences of a mining family during the United Mine Workers of America strike of 1913. Now read three writers' opinions about the strike. Each writer was given the same writing prompt highlighted below. Each writer expresses a different opinion, but each opinion is well supported by evidence from the story. A well-written opinion piece states a clear position, has supporting reasons, and has a concluding statement. Skillful opinion writers use linking words to connect their opinion to the supporting reasons. In the first opinion, annotations have been added to help you identify these important parts of an opinion piece. Which, if any, opinion do you agree with?

Opinion Writing Prompt

The strike called by the United Mine Workers of America in 1913 had deadly consequences. It also led to changes in U.S. labor laws that greatly benefited American workers. In your opinion, was Pa Zoric right to strike or should he have stayed on the job as Joseph wanted him to? State a clear opinion and give supporting reasons based on evidence from the introduction, story, and historical documents in the text.

Pa Was Right to Strike

The writer begins with a clearly stated opinion.

If workers must strike to gain basic rights, they should. In 1913 workers' rights were not protected by law in the United States. Men, women, and even children often had to work up to twelve hours a day. Some workplaces, like the mines in Colorado, were very dangerous. As the introduction stated, between 1902 and 1917, nearly 500 miners died in Colorado mines alone.

The writer creates an organizational structure that lists reasons for the opinion.

In the "Fight for Your Rights, Boys!" story, Pa Zoric came to America seeking opportunity for himself and his family. He worked hard in the CF&I mine. But he wasn't always rewarded for his labor. Some days, he had to shore up tunnels. Other days he had to lay track. And the mine didn't pay for that type of work. It paid for only the coal the men mined. Pa thought that a man should be paid for all of the work he did at the mine. The union hoped to change that with a strike, even if it meant causing trouble. "If trouble gets me paid . . . then maybe things need stirring," says Pa.

The writer uses evidence from the text to support the reason.

The writer uses linking words to connect opinions and reasons.

The union wanted other things to change too. For example, they wanted a say in how much the miners were paid. They wanted the miners to be able to choose where to live and where to shop. And they wanted mines to be safer for workers.

Pa taught Joseph that America was a place where a man could rise from poverty to privilege. He also learned that things weren't that different in America from the way they were in the old country. A handful of wealthy, powerful men like John D. Rockefeller Jr. controlled the mines. Miners had to do what they were told or starve. Pa knew that if the miners did not fight for their rights, life in America would be the same as it had been in Serbia. Because he wanted a better life for his family, he was right to strike.

The writer continues to use evidence from the text to support the reasons and uses linking words to connect opinions and reasons.

The writer provides a concluding statement or section.

Pa Was Wrong to Strike

The mine workers in the story should not have answered the union's call to strike. In 1913 American workers' rights were not protected by law. Miners who joined the strike wanted to force the mining industry to make changes. But the mine owners were not **obligated** to change anything. At that time, it was perfectly legal for owners to decide how to treat employees. And owners had every right to expect workers to accept their terms or seek other jobs.

Pa Zoric said he wanted to make a better life for his family. Working for the CF&I mine provided everything his family needed: a house, a school, a store, and an income. Joining the strike, on the other hand, cost his family all they had gained by coming to America.

Because Pa joined the strike, his family had to move out of their house. Joseph had to leave school. And they had to move to the Ludlow tent camp set up by the union. Pa thought the strike would end quickly. He was wrong about that too. The strike lasted through a long, cold winter.

By joining the strike, Pa also put his family in grave danger. The union set up the Ludlow camp in the mouth of the canyon to stop strikebreakers. And instead of striking peacefully, the miners prepared to fight. The guns Joseph saw proved that the pits were not just dug to protect women and children. They were dug to hide weapons the miners were prepared to use against the National Guard. Since the National Guard fights for the government, the miners were taking up arms not just against the mine owners, but against the United States. That was certainly wrong.

Workers should have a voice in the workplace. Their rights should be respected by industry. But since strikes often lead to violence, they are not the answer. Thirteen innocent women and children died as a result of the strike. Those innocent people would never have been at the Ludlow tent camp if the miners had not decided to strike.

Pa Had No Choice

Pa and the miners at the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company took great risks and made many sacrifices when they tried to form a union. In the story, these miners were shot at during a meeting. They were forced from their homes and had to spend a long, cold winter in a camp. However, Pa was right to strike because it was the only way that conditions at the mine would ever change.

In the story, which is based on the real-life events, the company treated the miners terribly. The miners worked long hours and sometimes they didn't even receive any pay for a day's work. The work also was very dangerous. Miners could die if there was an explosion inside the mine, and the mines where Pa worked had bad safety records—as in real life.

It is clear the mine owners weren't going to change. They didn't listen to the workers' complaints. Instead, Mr. Bowers, the mine boss in the story, hired the Baldwin-Felts detectives to scare the workers. The detectives quickly turned to violence to stop the workers.

Therefore, the workers had to take drastic measures to change their working conditions. Banding together and going on strike was the only option, even if it caused trouble. As Pa said in the story, "If trouble gets me paid for the work I do, then maybe things need stirring."

And even if Pa hadn't joined the union, he most likely would have been fired. Mr. McCarty implied that the union's "inside man" would badmouth Pa to the boss.

The miners didn't succeed immediately but the strike did lead to an investigation, which led to a new law. American workers owe many of the rights they now enjoy to the sacrifices made by workers like Pa. Sometimes people have to take great risks to bring about change.

EVALUATE THE OPINION TEXTS

Reread each opinion piece and evaluate it using the rubric below as a guide. Write your evaluation of each piece on a separate sheet of paper. Did the writers include the important elements?

Opinion Writing Rubric				
Opinion Trait	4	3	2	1
The writer states a strong opinion, position, or point of view.				
The writer supplies well-organized reasons that support his or her opinion using facts, concrete examples, and supporting evidence from the text.				
The writer links opinions and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses.				
The writer provides a concluding statement or section that supports the position.				

4—exemplary; 3—accomplished; 2—developing; 1—beginning

GLOSSARY

artisans (AR-tih-zunz) *noun* workers in a skilled trade, especially ones who make something by hand (page 2)

defiance (dih-FY-ens) *noun* bold disobedience (page 10)

democracy (dih-MAH-kruh-see) *noun* a country that is governed by leaders chosen by the people (page 5)

dwindled (DWIN-duld) *verb* gradually decreased in size or amount (page 11)

Industrial Revolution (in-DUS-tree-ul reh-vuh-LOO-shun) *noun* a time of rapid change in the economy sparked by the introduction of power-driven machinery (page 2)

pivotal (PIH-vuh-tul) *adjective* vitally important to the development or success of something (page 3)

precious (PREH-shes) *adjective* of great value (page 14)

scrip (SKRIP) *noun* a token used instead of money at company stores (page 9)

strike (STRIKE) *verb* to refuse to work, usually by an organized body of workers in order to get better conditions from their employer (page 3)

strikebreakers (STRIKE-bray-kerz) *noun* people who are employed in place of others who are on strike in order to stop the strike from succeeding (page 3)

unions (YOON-yunz) *noun* organized associations of workers formed to protect and further their rights and interests (page 3)

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Questions for Close Reading

Use facts and details from the text to support your answers to the following questions.

- On page 5, Lamont Bowers, the mine boss, is quoted as saying, "CF&I takes care of its own." This suggests he does not want unions in his camp. On page 6, Mr. McCarty says that the union inside man has Mr. Bowers "wrapped around his finger," and on page 7, Mr. McCarty says Mr. Bowers will fire those who don't join the union. What do these two claims suggest about Mr. Bowers?

- On page 8, the Baldwin-Felts detectives come to town. Why is their arrival important in the story?

- Joseph is told by his father and his friend to hide in the pits, but Joseph refuses to hide. Why is this detail important in the story?

- On page 14, Joseph sees Covey's ghost-white face urging him to go to the pit. What does the term *ghost-white* suggest about young Covey?

Comprehension: Story Elements

Joseph and his father did not see eye-to-eye about life in the mining town. Joseph saw positives while his father saw negatives. Complete the graphic organizer to identify how their thoughts differed.

Joseph—Positives	Pa Zoric—Negatives

Vocabulary: Figurative Language

Authors include figurative language to make stories more interesting and true to life. The story in this book includes three types of figurative language: similes, personification, and idioms. Locate them in the text and complete the chart to help you understand their meanings.

Page	Type of Figurative Language	Sentence from Text	Meaning
5	simile		
5	personification		
5	personification		
6	idiom		

Write to Sources: Informative/Explanatory Text

Throughout most of the story, Joseph maintains the same opinion about the union. At what point does he change his opinion and why? Use information from the text to write your explanation.

Informative/Explanatory Checklist

- ❑ Introduce your topic.
- ❑ Group related information together.
- ❑ Use facts and evidence from the text to support your writing.
- ❑ Use linking words and phrases such as *another*, *for example*, *also*, and *because*.
- ❑ Provide a strong conclusion.

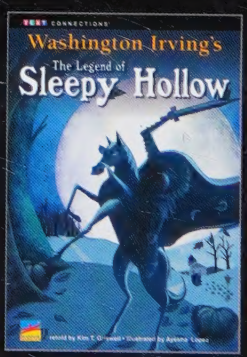
OPINION/ARGUMENT

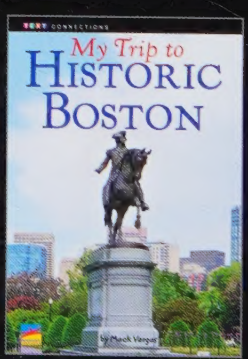
Level S/44
Lexile 760L

Opinions About Workers' Rights: The 1913 Ludlow Coal Miners' Strike

In 1913 Colorado miners went on strike to protest unsafe conditions, low pay, and a very long workday. Read this historical fiction story based on that tragic-but-pivotal event in the development of the American labor movement. Then read the opinions of three writers about whether or not going on strike was the right thing to do.

Enjoy the other Text Connections titles in this set.





Benchmark
UNIVERSE.COM™
BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY

ISBN 978-1-49
9 781490 00
Y0-DKF-79